

MEDIA RELEASE

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New online toolkit helps teachers provide an inclusive education to students with communication disabilities

July 2018 marks the launch of the first Australian online resource that builds the capacity of teachers to support the learning and inclusion of students with communication support needs (CSN). The Teachers' Toolkit has been developed in response to the struggle that schools often face in meeting the educational and social needs of students with CSN.

Students with CSN have little or no speech, usually as a result of a significant language, sensory, physical and/or neurological disability. Over 1.2 million Australians have a communication disability, with over one-third facing restrictions in their school or workplace*. Students with CSN can often face stressful situations at school, and miss out on educational opportunities.

"All students with communication support needs have the potential to learn and achieve, yet this goes unrealised if they are not understood in their schooling years." - Jan Ashford, Communication Rights Australia CEO.

Available at www.studentswithnospeech.org.au, the Teachers' Toolkit aims to help teachers feel more confident to engage and support their students with little or no speech, by equipping them with the latest information and practical step-by-step recommendations. Designed for busy teachers, the toolkit is intuitive with easy-to-navigate topics and interactive checklists that summarise key points.

"I feel that educators and support workers have a need for resources to help students with CSN, like myself. The Teachers' Toolkit is a great starting point with guidelines and practical strategies to help schools become the places of learning and acceptance for us as students with challenges so that we can develop and contribute as well." - Tim Chan

The free toolkit is relevant to all teachers - from mainstream and specialist schools, primary and secondary, and across public and private education sectors. It has been made possible through the NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) National Readiness Grants program, which aims to build the capacity of mainstream services, including the education sector.

"It is our hope that this toolkit will be shared and utilised widely by teachers across Australia, and through this, help build the capacity of schools and teachers to better support students with communication support needs" - Jan Ashford, Communication Rights Australia CEO.

By identifying relevant rights, programs, and best practice inclusive education, the toolkit is also valuable for students, their families and carers, all school staff, and allied health professionals such as speech pathologists.

The Teachers' Toolkit has been developed in collaboration with educators, speech pathologists, students with CSN and their families, and the Victorian Department of Education.

**Australian Bureau of Statistics*

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